

need to help them. Do not deny them the opportunity to do that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MICA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EDUCATION HAS BEEN A PRIORITY TO THIS CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I have often listened to the debate in these Chambers. Sometimes I feel like I am in a schoolyard where we have fourth-graders taunting each other back and forth, saying my program is better than yours, and you are a bad guy because you are not saying my program is a good program. We just have to remember that today is an election year, and we are just 3½ weeks away from that date.

I also noted that one of my colleagues tried to elevate the debate by quoting the Washington Post. Once I did that. I was back home in a town meeting back in my district. I quoted the Washington Post, and I kind of realize at times when I read the Washington Post that they don't like anybody. Two weeks ago they were calling on the President to resign. Now they are saying Congress is bad.

Whether or not Members want to quote the Washington Post, folks in Hegewish and south Chicago, they don't care what the Washington Post says. They are looking for a solution.

One thing I found from town meetings, meetings at the union hall, the VFW, the grain elevator, or a suburban women's club meeting, they are saying that they are tired of partisan politics. They are looking for solutions. That is why they are pretty proud of what this Congress has done in the last few short years.

If we think about it, think of all the things we were told that we could not do. I am one of those who was elected in 1994, this new Republican majority for the first time in 40 years.

I was told by the Washington Post and the New York Times and all the other liberals in the world that we cannot balance the budget, but we did it. They told us that we could not cut taxes, but we did it. They told us we could never reform welfare, but we did it. They told us we could not restructure the IRS, but we did it.

If we think about it, this Congress in the last 2 years has done some big things that we were told we could not do by many of those on the other side of the aisle. We balanced the budget for the first time in 28 years, we cut taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, we reformed our welfare

system, helping kids and families for the first time in a generation, and we restructured the IRS, taming the tax collector for the first time ever.

Those are pretty big accomplishments, something I am really proud of, because it took a Republican Congress to do that, and I am pleased that a Democrat President joined with us in a bipartisan effort to bring those four accomplishments and those four solutions home.

We are often asked, what is our next challenge? What more can we do to change how Washington works and to make Washington more accountable to the folks back home? Clearly, education is a priority for all of us.

When I am back home and I am walking through, whether it is Lincoln Way High School, which is one of the best in the Nation, in New Lenox, or in the south side of Chicago, in the Chicago public schools, or LaSalle Peru in the Illinois Valley, and I talk to local school board Members, administrators, teachers, and parents, they say, Congressman, about 4 to 6 cents of every dollar we spend on our public schools comes from Washington, but we also want you to know that with that 4 to 6 percent of the funding we spend on our local public school comes two-thirds of the paperwork we have to fill out.

If we look at how those dollars actually get spent when we appropriate them in Washington, only about 70 cents on the dollar actually reaches the classroom. Thirty cents on the dollar gets spent on bureaucratic overhead before it gets back to Illinois schools. Something is wrong. We need to do a better job.

Over the last few years we have made a difference, trying to change how Washington works to make sure when we appropriate funding that it counts, and education was a big winner last year when we balanced the budget. Not only did we make education a priority, but we increased funding for education in our budget by 10 percent, a \$5.4 billion funding increase over the previous year, even while balancing the budget.

Unfortunately, 30 cents on the dollar stays here in Washington. One clear message from the folks back home is we need to leave less money in Washington and get more money back to the classroom. That is why I am proud that we passed earlier this year legislation that will put more dollars into the classroom by streamlining the process, not saying 70 cents on the dollar, but actually 95 cents on the dollar reaching the classroom.

I am proud that this Republican Congress has given us the lowest student loan rates in 17 years, and that we have doubled Pell grants to twice what they were when I was sworn in 4 years ago to help low-income students better afford college with an outright grant. This year while the President ignored special ed, we provided \$500 million more for special education in our local public schools.

Last year, while we were working to balance the budget, we created the first ever school construction bond program, providing almost \$1 billion in helping build new classrooms for our schools. We increased funding for Head Start low-income kids in my district.

Mr. Speaker, education is a priority. We have given it a 21-gun salute. This House has passed 21 initiatives to help education in just the last 2 years. Education is a priority.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. PELOSI addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STILL TOO BIG, WITH A DEFENSE BUDGET TOO SMALL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Department will announce that the Federal budget is in surplus for the first time since 1969. Only 2 short years ago the President of the United States submitted a budget with a \$200 billion deficit, as far as the eye can see, if Members will recall.

What happened? There are a lot of Americans, and most Americans, including us, who really do not care where the credit falls, just as long as this Congress stays committed to a balanced budget and reducing the size of government. But it is important to understand how we got here, where we are today, so we can continue on the path of sound economic recovery.

Remember when the country was faced with large, chronic deficits at the beginning of the 1990s? Congress faced a choice. To cut the deficit, lawmakers had one of two choices to make, to cut spending or to raise the taxes. President Clinton and his allies here in the Congress chose to, remember, raise taxes. Congress at that time was still under the control of the Democrats, so President Clinton was able to get through the largest tax increase in the history of this great Nation.

Republicans, on the other hand, wanted to reduce the deficit by cutting spending. Republicans believe that government is too big and too bossy, and they believe that Washington wastes too much of our money. One would think that this is an obvious point to us, because it is to the American people. After all, even the President himself said in his 1996 State of the Union

Address that the era of big government was over.

If only that were true, Mr. Speaker. We can see now that this declaration was nothing more than words. Big government is alive and well, and it is bigger than ever. In fact, the Democrats have come back with still more ways to increase the size and power of government every year since.

While we can say that government is not quite as big as it would have been if the Republicans had not taken control of the Congress in 1995, the truth is that government continues to grow, and any attempts to cut government, no matter how wasteful and counter-productive the program may be, the liberals will immediately attack our resistance to more and bigger government as being extremist or mean-spirited.

It has never occurred to them that it is perhaps mean-spirited on the part of a Federal government to have so little respect for the working men and their labor that Washington takes between one-quarter and one-third of their precious money every month from their paycheck.

So that still leaves us with the very important question, how did we go from \$200 billion deficits, as the President had proposed, as far as the eye can see, only 2½ years ago, to the budget surplus that we now enjoy?

Let me tell the Members, remember, it is true that there have been some reductions in spending, but almost all of them have come out of one place it should not have come out of, Mr. Speaker. That is the Pentagon. Defense spending is now dangerously low, and our military forces are not what they should be.

Mr. Speaker, we know that to be the truth, but our Democrat colleagues, in their boundless faith in human nature, ignore history and simply do not believe in the fundamental precept that America must achieve peace through strength.

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As for other spending, Republicans did manage to limit the number of new spending initiatives of President Clinton and the Democrats over the past few years. But the primary reason why the budget is in surplus today is because revenues are way, way, way up. Liberals will point to the President's 1993 tax increase as a reason why revenues are up, hoping that we will not examine the budget tables ourselves to see if, in fact, this is true.

Revenues are up primarily from the number of people who are taking advantage of low tax rates on capital gains, the part of the economy that is the lifeblood of any dynamic growing economy.

President Reagan cut the tax on capital gains, and the Republicans cut it again just last year. Savers, investors, entrepreneurs, and other job creators are taking advantage of that, and the economy is benefiting from that. Jobs

are being created, and revenues have soared. That, Mr. Speaker, is primarily the reason why the budget is now in surplus when it was in deep red only a few years ago.

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that, if we go back before the battles that have raged in the last several weeks, there has to be a fundamental question of why we came to Congress.

I grew up in the town of Bozrah, a town about 2,400 people. I knew that, oftentimes, those neighbors of mine could not compete when they were trying to deal with large corporations or an oppressive government. It seemed to me the obligation of an elected representative is to come here and be their voice, to fight for our friends and neighbors when they cannot do it on their own.

What is our answer to what is happening to seniors on Medicaid HMO programs? What is our answer to the average family that lives in fear that the health care program they have paid for will not protect them when it is necessary?

My wife went in for a 4½ hour operation. They removed a disk from her neck. They took a piece of bone from her hip. They put it back into her neck. A 4½ hour operation. She gets back to the hospital room around 5 o'clock.

The doctor comes by 6:30 and says, you know, I would really like to keep you here, but I know the insurance company is not going to pay. But I am going to try. You will probably get stuck with a bill. She was all wired up with all the things that kill pain and what have you that you need after an operation. So she said fine.

The next day, of course, the claim was rejected by the insurance company. That did not shock us, frankly, because we thought that was going to happen. What shocked us is what happened to the doctor. The doctor got a letter from the insurance company saying do not try to do this again. Do not worry about what your patient needs or what the long-term impact is. Just dump them out on the street.

My wife would get along. We have got family. We would find a way to help her. But there is some people that do

not have a lot of family. When we were going back for a checkup, we saw this woman. She could not have been 4-foot tall. She had a piece of metal in the front of her chin and two pieces on the back of her head. She had the marks from that halo when you have a serious neck operation.

My wife said to her, "What happened to you?" She says, "Oh, I came in for a hernia operation. I am 76 years old. It is same-day surgery, you know. As soon as I had the surgery, they sent me home. I walked in the door, passed out, and broke my neck. I spent the last 4 months in the hospital."

Most times, when we are dealing with an issue, it has such a limited impact that we have to seek out those who have been victims. We have to go out and hold hearings. These just come at us from our family and everybody else.

My brother runs the family dairy farm. One night, Ike felt his entire right side of his face losing all muscle control. He is 40-some years old. That kind of thing scares people. I do not know if it would scare a doctor, but it scared the heck out of me.

Ike thought it was serious. He drove down to the emergency room. The insurance company said, "No, no, just because you lost all sensation in the right side of your face, that is not serious."

I am not a doctor. Again, I cannot tell my colleagues what would have happened to my brother's girlfriend had she had a real medical system. She was 38 years old when she died after they refused to look at her tumor, after they refused to test her tumor.

What is this Congress doing? This Congress is sitting around here, and its leaders are fighting about whether you can fire or prevent the hiring of a former Democrat for a job downtown. Is it not wonderful, we have a fight where the Republican leadership is trying to tell public corporations they are not supposed to hire Democrats.

If you have been a Democrat, the rule is you cannot have a job. Do my colleagues know what? If this was organized crime, we would call it a RICO operation. My colleagues are out there trying to deny people health care; and when people want to work here, they want some kind of sign-off from the Republicans.

I am telling my colleagues this country needs health care reform. This is not about good politics, which it is. It is about people's life and death.

The leadership of this Congress is spending more time trying to make sure somebody does not get a job downtown than taking care of the health care of people of this country.

The same goes for education. The same goes in 100 different areas. We have not done the work we ought to do on pensions. In my district, a company closed, and the same day 100 people were notified they had no jobs. They found out their pension had been absconded with, been stolen or lost by the individual who managed it.